



Aloha

From Our House to Yours

www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org

Newsletter of Ronald McDonald House Charities® Hawaii

Issue 1, February 2022

Tenacious New Year's Twins!

Imagine the parents' delight—an upcoming holiday season and plans to welcome newborn twins to join their four-year-old big brother at home in the new year.

In 2016, this is what Malia Parente and Ross Macariola Jr. hoped for and expected. But, as the new year approached, Malia had complications with her pregnancy. Already at high risk because she was having twins, she had sharp pains—far before her due date. The couple and their doctors in Waimea on the Big Island, where they lived, prepared for an emergency C-section.

The twins were born on New Year's Day 2017, Jenni weighing only 2 lbs, 9 oz and



Jenni on the day she was born, prior to being medevaced to Oahu.

their son, Jenson, weighing 2 lbs, 4 oz. Considered micro-preemies, their immune systems and bodies were immature. Both had to be airlifted from Waimea to an Oahu hospital for emergency care, while Malia stayed back to recover from the C-section.



Ross and Malia with their eight-month-old twins.

Ross flew with the twins and stayed with them at the hospital until Malia could join him a few days later. Her mother took care of their older son. She told Malia to stay strong so she could help her twins grow stronger.

Malia remembered holding her first born, Jacob, after his birth. This was part of the normal bonding process. This time, she was in the hospital with her newborns and husband flying to another island for critical medical care while she remained behind with empty arms.

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A Sudden Change of Plans

As a young girl, Emma Forbes volunteered to make meals at the Ronald McDonald House in New York, never imagining she would find it her own place of comfort and support years later.

The decades-old memory had begun to fade when Emma and her husband, Trey Brown, flew from Connecticut to Hawaii to visit friends on Maui. They planned to stay for a week in mid-November 2021 and enjoy a vacation before the birth of their first child in March. But their week's stay turned into months.



Jamie arrived 15 weeks early.

The long flight had left Emma feeling swollen, but she thought it was a normal part of pregnancy. Three days later, she was even more swollen, so she checked her blood pressure and found it elevated enough to call their doctor in Connecticut.

Their doctor advised the couple to go to the emergency

room. Emma's blood pressure had risen to 194/101 by the time she arrived at the hospital. Other test results confirmed she had preeclampsia, a serious condition that can lead to health risks for mother and their unborn baby.

At just 24 weeks pregnant, Emma was medevaced to Oahu and admitted to Kapiolani Medical Center for Women and Children. The urgency of the hospitalization was upsetting and scary. Suddenly, their lives had changed and the uncertainty, fear, and concern over Mom and baby's health was overwhelming.

"Everything happens so fast, you don't have time to think about it or to process anything," Trey said.

After being in the hospital's ICU (Intensive Care Unit) for a few days, Emma's blood pressure came down. But their unborn baby's heart rate climbed.

Doctors told the couple that Emma needed a C-section.

Baby Jamie came into this world 15 weeks early at only 1 lb, 6 oz. A micro-preemie, he also had respiratory and gastro-intestinal issues.

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Message from our President



Jerri Chong

Aloha,

We begin 2022 still amidst a worldwide pandemic. Although it appears the virus has mutated into a less deadly strain, at Ronald McDonald House Charities

Hawaii, our priority remains the health and well-being of our families, staff, volunteers and everyone who is part of our extended RMHC Ohana.

Most of the children who stay at the Ronald McDonald House are seriously immunocompromised. Many are undergoing life-saving treatment for cancer, leukemia, organ failure, or critical birth-related conditions.

No one can predict what tomorrow will hold, especially parents of critically ill children. We can all relate with the fear and stress of the unknown. We can all appreciate how much it means

to get support and understanding from others during a crisis.

That's what the Ronald McDonald House is all about. Making a difference in families' lives when they need each other the most. Providing a home-away-from-home for families desperately seeking medical care on Oahu that they can't get at home. Offering all the essential services to take care of their day-to-day needs, so parents can focus on helping their child get better.

Compassion and care are the touchstones we stand by. Every child is precious, and we are dedicated to keeping families together, safe and protected, on their child's journey to recovery.

This year, we celebrate 35 years of taking care of more than 14,000 families at the most vulnerable time in their lives. And here, they have found hope and support, and the Aloha Spirit,

which is the hallmark of our island community.

Please know that this is possible only because of the support of our generous and caring community. Whether donating time or dollars, volunteering, or participating in our fundraising events, your help directly impacts the lives of our Ronald McDonald House families. It has made the difference for families struggling during a child's critical journey, helping them heal and grow stronger. And it has strengthened our commitment to continue serving and to keep the House that Love Built open and enduring.

Mahalo to all of you, and best wishes for the new year.

From our House to yours,

Jerri Chong, RMHC Hawaii

"Aloha From Our House to Yours," the newsletter of Ronald McDonald House Charities Hawaii (RMHC-Hawaii), is published three times a year.

A Sudden Change of Plans

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Emma and Trey were told to expect to be on Oahu for 32 to 34 weeks, taking turns at the hospital to visit Jamie who would be in NICU (Neonatal Intensive Care Unit).

They were referred to the Ronald McDonald House on Judd Hillside, which had taken extra measures to ensure sanitary conditions amidst the COVID-19 Omicron variant outbreak. Emma had a positive association

with her volunteer work at the Ronald McDonald House in New York, and the couple were grateful to stay at the Judd Hillside House in Hawaii.



Emma and Trey visit Jamie in the hospital.

"It's nice to have some place to come back to for a meal and to rest," Trey said. The House helped them relax and stay calm, despite a chaotic and uncertain situation.

Emma said that meeting the other families is wonderful support and they don't have to stress about all the essentials. "We can just focus on Jamie."

Both Emma and Trey put jobs on hold and arranged early maternity and paternity leaves. They are grateful for family in Connecticut that is

helping care for their dog and home.

One month after they arrived at the Ronald McDonald House on Judd

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Hillside, Jamie had doubled his birth rate to three pounds—a good way to start the New Year.

Other Ways the Community Supports Us

There are so many ways to get involved. Go to our website www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org for more information.

McFun-Raiser

For more information, email Mikaela@rmhchawaii.org

Duwayne Abe, Salt Lake Elementary School principal, and students pick up McFun booklets in a fundraiser for their school and RMHC Hawaii.



You hold the keys to comfort and support



Donate your vehicle today

Every car, truck, boat, or motorcycle means another meal, another night, and another chance for families to stay together as their ailing child receives life-saving medical care. It's a simple and quick way to help, and your vehicle donation may even qualify for a tax-deduction! (855) 227-7435 (CarsHelp) rmhc.careasy.org.



Kai Goo – Special Events Intern

Internships

We welcome interns to help us with work important to achieving our mission. Our fall interns jumped in to help us at a busy time—planning and implementing our Share A Night Benefit & Heroes of the Heart Auction.

Check our website for internship opportunities or email Kiree@rmhchawaii.org

Kai: “Working for the greater good was both educational and emotionally fulfilling.”

Trevor: “I learned more about working with a non-profit and was able to do a variety of tasks and social media, which gave me hands-on experience, while helping further RMHC Hawaii’s mission.”



Trevor Goo—Digital Media Intern

Tenacious New Year’s Twins continued from page 1

Later, on Oahu, Malia and Ross initially stayed at a hotel while visiting their twins daily, but they learned the twins would need to remain at the hospital for at least three months and watched closely in the NICU (Neonatal Intensive Care Unit) at Kapiolani Medical Center for Women and Children.

Then, a spark of good luck: Baby Jenson was discharged from the hospital and Malia and Ross were told that Ronald McDonald House on Judd Hillside Road had a room for them. It was exactly what the family needed to stay close to one another.

In the meantime, Jenni was diagnosed with meningitis and had to undergo emergency treatment. Even worse, it turned to hydrocephalus, and the potential outcomes were devastating. The parents steeled themselves as Jenni underwent a 21-day treatment.

“All you can think of when something like this happens is the health and healing of your child. My daughter was my first priority.”

Then, Jenson had to return to the hospital. His blood

count had dropped to the point where he needed a blood transfusion.

“It was overwhelming,” Malia said. “We were so fortunate to have been able to stay at the Ronald House. It helped ease our minds knowing we had a place to call home during our crisis and not having to worry about lodging, transportation, or anything else. Everything we needed was right there, so we could completely focus on the twins.”

The twins turned five-years-old on New Year’s Day, 2022.



Thriving twins, Jenni and Jenson, on their 5th birthday—New Year’s Day 2022.

“To this day, we talk about the Ronald McDonald House and all the new friends we made. We still consider each other ‘family,’” Malia said.

“Through the past five years, we’ve been through some roller coaster rides with additional surgeries and hospital stays.” Malia said that their daughter has had eight surgeries and their son has had three procedures.

She tells them, “You are brave and strong.”

“The twins have been fighters and continue to be fighters through it all.”

“Ronald McDonald House and all that you did for us will never be forgotten.”

Celebrating 35 Years

Helping Families When They Need it the Most

In 1987, Ronald McDonald House Hawaii opened its Judd Hillside House in Manoa to welcome families with seriously ill children in need of medical care on Oahu.

Honolulu is the hub for specialized medical treatment of children, not only from our own State, but from the entire Pacific Basin. Each year, thousands of children are hospitalized here for critical medical conditions, and hundreds of parents suddenly find themselves far from home and anything familiar, trying desperately to cope with a seriously or terminally ill child. A Ronald McDonald House provides for the special needs of these very special families.



Bucky and Mom Nicole in 2003.

Since 1987, more than 14,000 families have spent over 136,000 nights at the Ronald McDonald House, some for just a few days, others for many months. They arrive on Oahu with no place to stay, no family members to greet them, no friends or network of support. But the Ronald McDonald House is there for them.

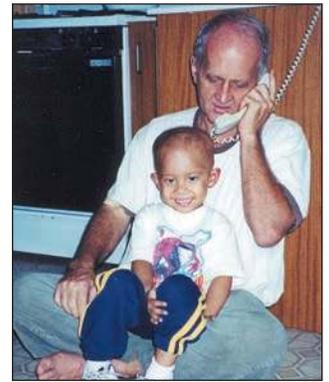
“We try to provide a sense of normalcy for the families, sort of a center in the eye of the storm that they’re going through,” said RMHC President, Jerri Chong. “We offer a safe and comfortable place for the family to stay, a fully stocked kitchen and laundry room, and daily transportation to and from the hospitals. Healthy meals and support services help keep



Bucky and Jerri Chong when he visited Judd Hillside Ronald House in 2011.

the family unit strong. But most important are the love and support, and caring hearts that embrace each family. When a family enters our doors, they know they have come to a safe and healing place.”

For Bucky Ludgate, just three years old when diagnosed with cancer, having mom and family to hold and comfort him, was everything. His mother, Nicole, who was in the military and deployed several times during Bucky’s treatments, had her worries eased because she knew grandpa could stay at the House and be with Bucky when she was away. “It made all the difference in the world,” said Nicole. “I can’t tell you how terrified I was. Each day away from him seemed like a year. But at least I knew he was safe, he was loved, and he wasn’t alone.”



Bucky and Grandpa.



Bucky and his mom Nicole in 2018.

This year marks 35 years of having Ronald McDonald House in Hawaii. The journey to this special milestone has been challenging, exciting, and even daunting. But it has also been joyous and inspiring, supported by Hawaii’s spirit of aloha, and the generosity of a very giving and caring community.

For Kitty Sullivan Wo, supporting the Ronald McDonald House is an important part of continuing her family’s legacy. Her father, Maurice “Sully” Sullivan chaired the 1987 capital campaign that raised funds to open Hawaii’s first Ronald McDonald House, and he supported the House generously through his lifetime. “Our dad had a special place in his heart for the House and all the families that called it ‘home’. After he passed, our mom embraced the RMHC mission and supported the House in a variety of ways including contributing to a major refurbishment. And although she, too, has now passed, my family and I are committed to ensuring

1987
Hawaii’s first Ronald McDonald House opens on Judd Hillside Road in Manoa

1997
RMHC Hawaii celebrates its 10th anniversary

2003
RMHC opens Family Room at Kapiolani Medical Center

2006
Hawaii’s second Ronald McDonald House opens on Oahu Avenue



The ten bedroom House became a home-away-from-home for families with critically ill children getting medical care on Oahu, after being completely renovated to add four more guestrooms and two additional bathrooms.



Capital Campaign Chair, House supporter and Foodland founder, Maurice “Sully” Sullivan, celebrated the 10th anniversary of RMHC’s Judd Hillside House.





Kitty Sullivan Wo at the Judd Hillside House.

that the passion she and dad had for the House lives on through us."

Volunteers and supporters of the House and its programs often experience first-hand how the unique needs of families are met and how the House provides families with strength and ease-of-mind when life is at its toughest.

Veronica Kaneko, retired McDonald's of Hawaii President and an RMHC volunteer since her very early days as a Mililani McDonald's restaurant manager, recalls the 'strength and fighting spirit' of the children and families at the House. "I would tell my own children how special these young people were, while facing so much adversity. Volunteering and helping – whether working at a Fun Run or their golf tournament, doing yardwork or preparing a meal, or just visiting the families - was so rewarding. The feeling of goodwill and the special place that these families hold in my heart still remains with me."

While there is a steady and enduring mission of providing a home-away-from-

home, RMHC has also been responsive to changing needs of children and families. The House now welcomes families with children up to age 21 that need emergency medical treatment. In addition, last year, a family recreation center opened at the Judd Hillside House to provide activities and resources for family members of all ages. There are computers and online services for tele-health appointments and distance learning for the children to keep up with schoolwork. Families can come together in the gathering area, which also has a gaming wall, reading loft, and much more.

Bruce Yanagihara, longtime supporter and RMHC Golf Tournament Chair for 25 years, said he was fortunate to get to know many of the families that stayed at the House over the years. That connection, along with seeing and being involved in how the House evolved to grow its services and help more people, was very personally rewarding for him. His belief in the mission has been a compass and motivator for his dedication as a volunteer.



Bruce Yanagihara chairs our Annual Golf Classic.

For the past 35 years, RMHC Hawaii has been built upon the generosity of our community. The Ronald McDonald House has survived and thrived—through storms and hurricanes, recessions, international crises, and a global pandemic that still continues — because of those who understand and believe in its mission and in keeping families close.

This mission is so important because children will get sick – despite world happenings. Families will always need help when faced with illness and unforeseen or unfortunate circumstances. And their greatest need – and the best medicine – is keeping their family together when they need each other the most.

It's a promise that Ronald McDonald House Hawaii is committed to keep – with open arms, hearts, and a home-away-from-home – as long as help for families is needed.

"Every single one of you left a lasting impression on us with your kind and gracious ways. We will always remember all we've gained throughout the short two months we were able to spend with our little girl, Kiya-Leshay. We gained a new family, new friendships and most of all, the love and support that guided us through each day. We will be forever grateful for this heartfelt experience and we will always remember your kindness and generosity."

-The Walker Family, Big Island

2007

RMHC Hawaii and Founding Board Members celebrate the Judd Hillside House 20th anniversary



2012

RMHC Hawaii Celebrates its 25th anniversary



Fred Hill and wife, Fran, attend RMHC Hawaii's 25th anniversary celebration. The former Eagles football player was one of the founders of the first Ronald McDonald House in Philadelphia, built in 1974, after his daughter was diagnosed with leukemia.

2021

RMHC Hawaii opens Family Recreation Center



for every age group. Keeping Families Close to each other and critically needed medical services.

2022

RMHC Hawaii celebrates its 35th anniversary

The Family Recreation Center, providing family gathering areas and multi-purpose living



Heroes of the Heart sprang into action on November 21st for our Virtual Share a Night Benefit and Auction. It was another year in which we couldn't gather for this major fundraiser, but that didn't stop us. Sponsors were able to select wonderful meals from one of our terrific restaurant partners, 3660 On the Rise, MW Restaurant or Ruth's Chris Steak House – Honolulu. Meals were packaged along with a bottle of wine and ready for drive-thru pick-up where our caped heroes of board members, staff and volunteers waited to greet, distribute, thank and send them on their way to enjoy in the comfort of their homes.

Our online auction was open to anyone who wanted in on the bidding fun. Auction items included exciting trips and experiences, an autographed Rolling Stones guitar, jewelry, art, fashion, toys, dining and so much more! The prize drawing's hottest item was the Alaska Reel Adventure trip won by our Golden Ticket winner, followed closely by a trip to a Giant's game sitting in the owners' seats – our winners are thrilled and planning their trips.

A loud and heroic cheer of thanks to all who supported and participated in this year's Benefit helping us raise \$220,000. **You are our Heroes of the Heart!**



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Prize Drawing Winners

Golden Ticket Winner: Matt Dodson
selected Alaska Reel Adventure

\$500 Shopping Spree: Michel Arakaki

Tahitian Beauty Necklace: Aaron Brewer

A Giant's Package: Tasha Napoleon

Las Vegas Getaway: JoAnn Okawa



Zola's Story

"Kids go through the hardest of the hard times."

Cortney Given had just returned home to Hawaii after visiting her parents in California. Her husband, Jeff, picked her and their two-year-old daughter up from the Honolulu International Airport and headed to the doctor's office for a pregnancy check up. A quick stop on the way to a UH basketball game, they thought.

As they sat in the doctor's office waiting for results, they sensed something was wrong. Eventually four medical personnel, including the doctor came back with a diagnosis: their unborn baby had hypoplastic left heart syndrome. Something only one in 4,300 have.

Cortney burst into tears, understanding what this meant. Ironically, she had worked for a family, taking care of a little boy with the same condition. She knew the implications: multiple heart surgeries, medicine, and lasting problems associated with the heart condition.

People told Cortney that only a strong person would be given this challenge. But, she felt alone and isolated. Inside, she was overwhelmed.

"You have your own version of what life is going to be like, and then, in seconds, things change and you have no plan. It makes you feel unstable, insecure. I felt incapable of handling anything. I definitely didn't feel stronger than others."

She and Jeff, who had just sold everything in California to move to Hawaii, returned to Southern California to be with top heart specialists for her delivery.

Baby Zola had her first heart surgery 36 hours after she was born. The parents stayed at Ronald McDonald House in Los Angeles while taking turns visiting the hospital for nine weeks, longer than most stays, due to multiple complications, including a cardiac arrest and bypass surgery. Their older daughter, Grey, still a wiggly toddler, stayed with her grandmother and became antsy and begged to see her parents again.

One of Cortney's most memorable experiences was how—at the point of exhaustion—she, Jeff, and Grey spent a day at the Ronald McDonald House napping and holding each other.

"I will always be grateful for that moment we had at RMHC to just relax and hug our oldest daughter who had been so confused and not allowed to see her sister.

After three reconstructive heart surgeries, Zola has a single ventricle pumping. Cortney is grateful that the condition was caught in utero and that they were able to get specialized medical care while staying at the Ronald McDonald House, where they could find solace and support during their medical crisis.

Cortney calls her daughter Zola a "Heart Warrior." Now a mentor in the Heart Community, she tells mothers that she mentors: "It's a hard, tough journey, but you CAN do this even when you feel overwhelmed. So go forward and move through the challenges."

The journey is now part of Zola's story, preparing her to deal with the condition and any future challenges.

Cortney and Zola visited RMHC Hawaii and donated toys in December. Cortney is happy to share her story to help other parents going through similar "heart" issues with a child. They are our featured family during "Heart Month."



Wish List

- Disinfectant sprays/wipes
- All-purpose cleaning spray
- Antibacterial hand soap
- Paper towels
- Individually wrapped snacks
- Xerox/copy paper
- Disposable masks

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